Rock Island Preservation Society

RIPS NEWS

Advocates for Historic Architecture

Membership Meetings

November 17, 2026 **Hauberg Civic Center ~ 1300 24th St., Rock Island**
Tuesday 7:00 PM Regular business meeting

December 15, 2026 **Hauberg Civic Center ~ 1300 24th St., Rock Island**
Tuesday 6:00 PM Annual Holiday Gathering.
Please note the earlier than usual start time.

January 19, 2027 **Hauberg Civic Center ~ 1300 24th St., Rock Island**
Tuesday 7:00 PM Regular business meeting

If you have requested. an email reminder with the Meeting Agenda will be sent prior to each meeting with confirmation of time and location of each meeting.

Remember to keep the third Tuesday of each month marked on your calendar for monthly RIPS meetings and activities

NEW LANDMARK NOMINATIONS

RIPS is always proud to draft and submit Landmark nominations. We believe that this is an effective way to bring attention to Rock Island's historic structures and to help ensure their survival. Typically, we research and write nominations for structures owned by private entities, often homes. In October, however, we set a RIPS precedent when we submitted nominations for two publicly owned buildings – Rock Island City Hall and the County Office Building, formerly the headquarters of Modern Woodmen of America.

Those submissions required a great deal of research as well as coordination with the Rock Island Mayor and Council and the County Board Chairman and Administrator. We did not want to take either of these governmental units by surprise. And we wanted their support – or at least not opposition. We felt that submitting both nominations at the same time would show that Landmarking is an equally fair process for both governing groups.

Architecturally they are products of different eras and are quite dissimilar in appearance. Yet they form a rich governmental block that should inspire all. Next time you have occasion to enter one of these buildings, don't just focus on the doorway and your destination, but take a good look at the building. And enjoy the heritage we all share.

The article on the next page of this newsletter demonstrates the significance of the County building, both architecturally and historically. The next newsletter will feature City Hall. Many RIPS members contributed to these nominations by research, writing, and photography.

HOLIDAY SOCIAL

Tuesday, December 15th 6:00 PM at Hauberg Mansion

Members and friends are invited to our annual holiday gathering at the beautifully decorated Hauberg Mansion. If you know of someone who is interested in the history and architecture of Rock Island, bring them as your guest.

Please bring a sweet or savory "small bite" to share. Beverages and table service is provided. Set up will begin at 5:30, if you would like to help.

The Social begins an hour earlier than our usual meeting time so note it on your calendar.

ROCK ISLAND COUNTY OFFICE BUILDING



Originally built in 1898 as the headquarters of the fraternal benefit society, Modern Woodmen of America (MWA), this classic Second Renaissance Revival style structure now serves as the Rock Island County administrative center.

MWA was founded in 1883 in Lyons Iowa by John Cullen Root, moved to Fulton Illinois in 1884 and bought land in Rock Island (3rd Avenue and 15th Street) in 1897 for $7,450. Architects Leonard Drack and George Kerns designed the building in 1896. It was completed in 1898 at a cost of $145,000; $65,000 higher than the original estimate.

More than 15,000 people attended the laying of the cornerstone and participated in a huge parade on April 27, 1898. William Jennings Bryan was the keynote speaker.



Designed by Drack and built by John Volk in 1904, the eastern building addition doubled the available office space. There was a small courtyard between the two structures; a 1st floor passageway and elevated walkways between the 2nd and 3rd floors. The two buildings were joined in 1940 as part of a major remodeling.

MWA had "camps" throughout the country supporting its fraternal and insurance functions, along with Royal Neighbors of America (its ladies auxiliary founded in 1892). MWA hit the 1,000,000-member mark in 1910.

Outgrowing its original space, MWA sold the building to Rock Island County (RICO) and moved to its current Mississippi Riverfront offices in 1967. RICO has owned and maintained the building since then.

This polished granite, Minnesota's Pink Kettle River sandstone and smooth-faced, ruddy colored St. Louis brick building includes nine front bays, copper pediments, Ionic columns, egg and dart molding, terra cotta tablets and interlocking trefoil arches. There are also ax, beetle (heavy headed wooden tool for driving wedges) and wedge icons along with scrolled modillions and the Modern Woodmen coat of arms. The west façade pediment includes the 1898 construction date and a "modern woodman" figure.



Rock Island County has been a good steward of this classically designed building that should meet its needs for many years to come.

Photos: Upper right, 1898 MWA building before the eastern building expansion. Middle right, MWA logo detail in the eave. Bottom, 1904 postcard photo of the two buildings.

SAVE THE CENTENNIAL BRIDGE – IT'S NOT TOO LATE

The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) and Parsons, its engineering consultant, announced their preferred alternative to replace the Centennial Bridge – E2, a new bridge built next to the existing structure, followed by demolition of the Quad Cities treasured and iconic Centennial Bridge.

While IDOT is soliciting public opinion about its recommendation and its proposed new bridge design types (see images below), it's not too late to let them know the existing bridge should be rehabilitated.

Why? Because an engineering recommendation is NOT a public policy decision. IDOT, local, state and federal elected officials should hear from you that spending about $75 million to renovate what we have is a better investment than spending nearly $300 million for a new bridge that will look nothing like what we have now.

A renovated bridge will last at least 40 more years, handle 80,000-pound trucks, provide pedestrian / bike paths on both sides of the bridge, have upgraded and protected piers, have a less significant environmental impact compared to a new bridge, provide four 11-foot-wide lanes (the same as a new bridge) and retain the existing National Register listed bridge and infield features.



You can see that any of the four proposed designs are inferior to what we currently enjoy – the first tied arch bridge to span the Mississippi River. The proposed designs, while having some limited architectural and design features, are asymmetrically shifted towards the Illinois side of the river, as this is where the navigation channel is located. It makes all of the proposed designs lopsided.

Now: Tell IDOT they should not have eliminated rehabilitating the Centennial Bridge. Tell them to listen to the public and to our elected officials who support repair rather than replace. Tell them to use the estimated saving of $160 million in precious IDOT public funds for other critical infrastructure projects.

Got to www.centennialbridge.com to leave comments and to see additional information.

These are the four design options for the replacement bridge. The renderings are from the IDOT webpage. There is no option to replicate the iconic five arch bridge.

Single Tower Cable Stayed





Two Towered Cable Stayed





SAVE THE CENTENNIAL BRIDGE – IT'S NOT TOO LATE

Proposed replacement bridge options, continued from previous page

Single Tied Arch

Steel Plate Girder

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